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AN
E S S A Y
ON THE
Reform of Parliament, &c.



A N
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O N
Parliamentary Reform,
AND ON
THE EVILS LIKELY TO ENSUE,
FROM A
Republican Constitution,
I N
I R E L A N D.

BY THEOBALD MC. KENNA, ESQ. K
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*Cunctas nationes et urbes, aut populus, aut primores aut
singuli regunt. Delecta ex his et constituta Reipublicæ forma,
laudari facilius quam evenire potest.* TACITUS.

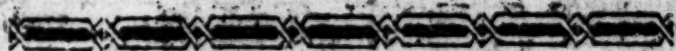
D U B L I N :
P R I N T E D F O R
JOHN RICE, COLLEGE-GREEN.

1793.



ERRATUM.

In Page 5, l. 20, for *Sedition*, read *Seduction*.



A N

ESSAY

ON THE

Reform of Parliament, &c.

THE political speculators of the present age appear to have divided themselves into two sects; of these, the one estimates very highly, the other, moderately, the good qualities of our species; the former, apparently convinced, that honesty, justice, and temperance, constitute the outlines of the human character, incline to think, that we cannot be too little controuled; the latter, observing how frequently these virtues receive an alloy, are desirous to provide for the possible operation of the kindred foibles. The first are fond to refer, whatever does not coincide with their ideas of right, to the vice of systems and wickedness of rulers; the second, admitting, that such accusations may be, and often are, well founded, attribute general effects to general causes; human societies, like him,

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of

of whose nature they partake, are not destined for perfection; and like him, are confounded in incoherency, when they pursue it. With the former, all arrange themselves, whose scope of observation is not very extensive, all who have thought little and not profoundly. In this class also, a benevolent man may find himself, especially, if he should happen to be also, a man of not much reflection. But tenderness is not always the characteristic of this sect of politicians. Severe to those below, refractory to those above him, the public spirit of the Republican is not infrequently animated by envy. His desire of Equality seldom reaches lower than his own rank. His reluctance to acknowledge a superior is sometimes, rather inconsistently, combined with a repugnance to renounce his own preeminence. With the latter description, we usually discern those, who having read, observed, and investigated minutely, perceive the present, rather a close representation of past ages; and that the page of history, like the theatre of politics, is tarnished by depravity. These latter are willing to strike a compromise, sacrificing barren rights for productive happiness. Aware that we must be governed, they think the manner of governing a secondary consideration. So far they certainly are right; it is the first of privileges to enjoy the advantages of order. Liberty is valuable as it arises, not as it recedes from it. A mode of government may be bad, but an alteration designed to improve, may be still worse. Altho' specious in its present operation, the remote and collateral effects may be destructive.

we. There is a period, at which, without rule or precept, men will resist,---when their personal safety, and the enjoyment of property become precarious. But where a Government is tolerable, and the security it affords, complete, extraordinary modes of opposition, should not be recurred to. Its defects, and the probable remedies of them are subjects for speculation; when well ascertained, they are to be propounded; no man can say that in the constitution we live under, any reasonable proposition can be suppressed; I will go further, no reasonable proposition can under our constitution be finally rejected. Having prophesied with tolerable accuracy, in the business of the Roman Catholics, I may permit myself here to judge, and to offer this remark in refutation of the calumnies against the British Constitution; at least, as one good reason, to justify myself, in idolizing, as I ever have, the fortunate institution, and censuring every measure, which inclines to alter it.

I am very far from the advocate of passive obedience, coercion is the power intrusted to the state against the subject; resistance to the subject against the magistrate. But to either there is a term, beyond which, the first is Tyranny, the second Anarchy. I think that a very wise distinction, which an eminent writer has made; the means should be proportioned to the end, to the urgency of grievance and the advantage of the remedy. In a country consisting, not of military clans, casually collected together; but of citizens

cultivating the arts of peace, mental refinement, trade and profession; the abuse must be enormous, which can justify the overt act of interrupting order: the sum of taxes imposed, the degree of influence in the crown, the number of privileges enjoyed by the subject, the appropriation of revenue, are very proper subjects for parliamentary investigation; but no irregular disposition, short of oppressive extravagance, authorises the dissolution of society. When the state is the object of hostility, the citizen ends, where the soldier commences. The right of discussion, that middle term between resistance and submission, is the great advantage of our free constitution; to step over this resource and appeal to arms, resembles the folly of a man, who being at variance with his neighbour about the boundary of a field, should insist on fighting him, until either fell, rather than bring their pretensions into a court of justice.

That every citizen, who has property to defend, should enjoy the full means of protecting it, is indisputable; but the propriety of publicly regimenting, forms another question, which circumstances must decide on; it may be laudable, innocent, or criminal. A great deal depends upon the character of the persons; who chuse this mode of recreation. At any rate they are fit objects for police inspection. But, I controvert most decidedly the proposition, which of late has been advanced; that it is proper, or essential to commit the safeguard of the country, solely to citizens,

citizens; those who assume the mixed character, necessarily become either bad citizens, or bad soldiers; probably both. If they live together so much, and for such a length of time, as to acquire the habits of obedience, which constitute discipline, they cannot pursue any other occupation, and are lost to the public industry; if they do not; disciplined invaders will overmatch them. A small standing army, recruited from the people, and officered from the gentry of the kingdom, answers both purposes more effectually. Its composition leaves no apprehensions to just liberty; it secures leisure for peaceable pursuits, and peaceable enjoyments; and the numbers, who drop continually off, into private life, preserve in the nation no inconsiderable degree of martial spirit. This the quaint jargon published in the name of the society of United Irishmen denominates "Sedition." I conceive, *Seduction*¹ that the trade of a soldier, is full as essential, as that of a shoemaker; it is a part of the division of labor, upon which the fabric of civil society is raised; and by the existence of it, we are enabled to become, a commercial state, not a military Republic. The Gentlemen, who suggest this latter as an improvement of our condition, may be admirably fitted to sing together, Ossian and Oscar, and Carrol and Conal, "on the hills of woody Morven;" unfortunately they have come a few hundred years too late into the world. The doctrine is only calculated for that state of Society; or for another, from whence it seems to have been collected; the little tribes of armed banditti, who constituted the Republics

lies of antiquity ; or perhaps, for the more modern barbarians, the retainers of the feudal Barons.

It has frequently been asserted, that the voice of the people does not carry sufficient weight, and at present the assertion is not much controverted. To remedy the inconvenience is a matter somewhat intricate. I have never had a second opinion upon the cause ; on the means of redress I cannot hesitate. The name of people was denied to a majority of the nation ; the public voice thus languid, neither procured attention, nor deserved it. If we could reconcile to ourselves to set aside the religious denomination, to call the Catholic enfranchisement, reform ; and to consider it, merely as adding a number of independant men, to the body of electors, we should perceive this measure nearly adequate to remove the defect. The amendment proposed in England by Mr. Flood, which was admitted to have been, the most unexceptionable ever submitted to Parliament, proceeded no further. It indeed did not go so far, it did not recruit the elective body in corporations. Many desire a greater extent of alteration ; some, who last year thought the Catholics not sufficiently instructed to be admitted to the old Constitution, are willing at present to turn them adrift into the wilds of Democracy.

If the influence of the people be encreased, that of the Crown ought not to be diminished ; for thus doubly to assail the royal authority converts the Kingdom immediately into a Republic ; by teaching every man to seek his importance principally,

principally, if not solely, from the people, the third estate, hurried along by the animated ambition of candidates for distinction must speedily over-power both the Crown and peerage, and the country is mean while rendered subject, to all the storms of tempestuous competition. I should therefore conclude that we ought rather to take an option between the measures. Altho, there be not a majority, continually to counteract the court, a situation under which no Government could exist; yet if Parliament consist of some, who indebted for their political existence to public favour, can never controvert the public opinion; and of others, who from passion will oppose and investigate; and of a third class whose fortunes are involved so deeply in the fate of the country, that they are not likely to consent to a ruinous proposal; the nation cannot be in better hands; and there is a certainty that it will not suffer material detriment. The practice of our constitution will then establish a sufficient control to secure Liberty, without becoming too boisterous to incommode commerce. It appears to me most defective, that there are not merchants in Parliament, who, as well by their influence, as information, could protect the trading interest.

If the amiable, unfortunate Louis XVI. had fallen by assassination, princes might have trembled at the example; but the solemn perversion of justice under which he was murdered, bears intimidation from the palace to the cottage. He died merely, because the name and office of King had fallen into disrepute, and under pretences,

ces, which, if there had even been a colour for punishment, must be admitted unjust, because, when the facts were committed, both the name, and office promised him inviolability. If particular situations are suffered to be regarded a crime, it may become a popular fashion, or a popular phrenzy that rent is unlawful, and a man may be hanged, because he had succeeded to the inheritance of his father, and levied the produce of it. Who is secure, when neither past prejudices, nor past affection, nor station, nor integrity, nor yet the public faith solemnly pledged, can ensure protection? Sanguinary men, placed beyond their expectations, indulged their vanity in insolence to their royal masters. It was the good Antonio in the gripe of Shylock. Pedants in power, confounding the exercise of authority with the abuse of it, imagined that Louis must have been, what they read that Nero was, and murdered him on speculation; as the poet Cinna was slain, from the resemblance of his name, to that of Cæsar's enemy. His crime was to have been borne to a throne; any person in Europe would have accepted the condition, as a boon of providence; his persecutors searched his conduct for crimes, finding him innocent, they called him tyrant and killed him. This total subversion of right and equity in France may be traced to two causes; first, by extending political rights, and above all the right of interference, to men without property; the order of society is exactly inverted; every man is powerful in proportion as he is desperate. The first could not long subsist, without the second;

cond; the entire populace of the country is embodied in arms. Even that order, which now riots in the fruit of commotion, derives from it little advantage. It has only a present and a precarious enjoyment; when a settlement shall take place, the populace must return to its original condition, in a ruined country, with depraved characters, and frames enervated. The four years, which France has wasted in pursuing the vision of perfection, have produced more general desolation, and individual calamity, than was occasioned by the despotism of the preceding century; and the evils have not been mixed with any article of public or private consolation. When it is replied, that all this cannot be avoided in the course of great political changes, I am induced from the justification, to conclude against revolutions in general; and to submit to the evils I know, rather than to embark in a course of desperate remedy, of which none can determine the end or consequences. The revolution accomplished in England in 1688 was commendable; it was conformable to the universal wish, and produced of course (so far as related to that kingdom) little undeserved inconvenience. The abolition of despotism in France stands under the same apology; if the further alterations, which have taken place in that unhappy country, were right, which I am far from thinking, they were not worth the purchase paid for them.

“ Upon questions of reform, the habit of
 “ reflection to be encouraged, is a sober comparison of the constitution under which we live;
 “ not with models of speculative perfection,
 “ but

" but with the actual chance of obtaining a
 " better. This turn of thought will generate
 " a political disposition, equally removed from
 " that puerile admiration of present establish-
 " ments, which sees no fault and can endure no
 " change, and that distempered sensibility,
 " which is alive only to perceptions of in-
 " conveniency, and is too impatient to be de-
 " livered from the uneasiness, which it feels, to
 " compute either the peril or expence of the
 " remedy. Political innovations commonly pro-
 " duce many effects, beside those that are intend-
 " ed. The direct consequence is often the least
 " important. Incidental, remote, or unthought-
 " of evils frequently exceed the good that is de-
 " signed, or the evils that are foreseen." I trans-
 " cribe from Archdeacon Paley this sensible coun-
 " sel, it is applicable to this country, and the
 " neglect of the precept has transformed Mr.
 " Paine, from a good political writer into an in-
 " cendiary. He has minutely investigated, and ex-
 " posed in an exaggerated picture, the natural im-
 " perfections of limited monarchy: a solitary ob-
 " servation refutes him; that assemblage of foibles,
 " which he depreciates, has established public and
 " private happiness in England. His boasted system
 " of perfection has deluged France with misery.
 " The infant, upon whom art and anxiety have been
 " exhausted, often rises into adult age, feeble and
 " valetudinary. The object of the French Re-
 " volution should have been, to have secured the
 " poor from the oppression of their superiors. This
 " event was accomplished, when the Representatives
 " of the people had organized themselves into a
 " body, regular in its session and proceedings. Be-
 " yond that point, all innovations have been an idle,

warton

wanton and prodigal expenditure of human happiness.

I have no doubt, that the mode of electing our members of parliament in this kingdom is susceptible of improvement; but surely military associations for the purpose, cannot be commendable. Those, who associate may, as they actually did a few years back, happen to light on a very ruinous plan of alteration. And even if the mode they adopt be wise; there is more of mischief, in the precedent, of arming when we please, and carrying political questions by the bayonet; than there can possibly be good in the proposed amendment. A similar principle applies against conventions. If we could summon a Convention, like a parish vestry, it might be a commodious mode of collecting the public sentiment. At home, the effect of the proceeding is, to present to the lower orders a prospect of alteration. - Abroad, we are considered in a disturbed and precarious condition. The first, injures the police; the second, the reputation of the country. Whilst, like England during the confusion of the Saxon Heptarchy, the land is parcelled into distinct nations, it becomes incapable of exertion. Let us reflect for an instant, that we are not an aggregation of hunters, savages, or shepherds; but a people, in an advanced state of society, desirous of security and happiness, both incompatible with these tumultuous proceedings. We are members of a commercial country, but commerce or manufacture cannot run, if the entire people be kept staring, on political phenomena. We are ambitious

ous to cultivate foreign trade, but we can neither have credit, nor connexions out of the kingdom, if strangers perceive among us, four or five rival governments, ready to wage war one with the other. The mercantile interest is the soul of public prosperity; gentlemen who amuse themselves with politics, ought to take these circumstances under their consideration. As the frogs in the fable cautioned the school-boys, who disturbed their pond; "what is sport to them, may be death," to their fellow citizens, We are a commercial, not a military state; and the injury done first by rendering the credit of the country precarious, and then, by diverting the people from their industry, are tenfold the mischiefs, which could be inflicted by the most corrupt court, and the most profligate Parliament. It seems to be a good deal forgotten, in the rage for constitution-making, that the most valuable privileges are peace and security, the certainty that your property, and all the advantages you enjoy, are indisputably your own, and will be transmitted in the order you desire.

From observations on the means of redress employed, the transition is natural to the grievances, which are to be remedied. In arguing these questions, I wish my opinion to be generally understood; I think that the influence of the people in Parliament ought to be enlarged; and that, the extension of this influence, is extremely compatible, with the proper balance of power, necessary to be preserved in order to avert the evils of Republicanism. The exclusion of the Catholics

tholics from the privileges of the constitution, is a great grievance; and many other still greater grievances spring from it. Until this be redressed, it is vain to seek for improvement of any kind in Ireland; the emigrations to foreign service; the cast of dissipation; the idleness, the inclination to petty insurrections, which a quibbling pedant imputed to our national character, are all occasioned by either the past or present oppressions of this system. This evil we may venture to pronounce removed; from the enfranchisement of the Catholics many new relations will arise; it would seem to me judicious, to observe the effects of these, before we proceed further. There are arguments, which without complimenting the force of them, one finds it difficult to answer; of this kind is a late assertion, that admitting the Catholics to the right of voting would only render bad worse, and furnish a greater number to be corrupted. If there be corruption in our system of election, it proceeds not from any defect in the system itself; when the independant men of every county are admitted to vote, the very circumstance, which increases the number of persons to be influenced, diminishes the value of those, who are willing to be so. If still the practice of the constitution falls short of public advantage, every man, who feels the inconvenience, will naturally exert himself to remove it. From the errors, which have taken place, when the people was imperfectly constituted, we must not infer, that like consequences will ensue in future.

The taxes of Ireland, even compared with its means, are lower than those of any other country,

country. There are certain expences, which must always be necessarily incurred. These are lessened by our connexion with Great Britain; if we had not the protection of a Navy, our vessels could not keep the sea. The Corsairs of Algiers, or any other pirates would not only pillage our traders, but cut the ships out of our very harbours. Without Consuls and Ambassadors to assert the interests of our Merchants, wherever their goods were landed, they would be subject to oppression. If we had not a regular military establishment we should be exposed to the predatory incursions of foreign marauders; and to the sallies of desperate banditti at home. Such was the picture, which Europe exhibited, before the formation of armies, and navies; the world was in a state of warfare; the sea covered with savage pirates; every nation exposed to the ravages of adventurers foreign and domestic. If civil Society be good, the protections of civil Society are necessary. The advantages of civil Society are leisure for the cultivation of our minds, and peace for the advancements of our fortunes, in both, security; but among the blunders of Ireland for the last half century, it was attempted to work the Constitution without the most essential part of the machine; to make Liberty circulate through the land, when the vital organ, *a people*, had been forcibly torn from it.

We must besides, at least while we are emulous of affluence and refinement, have magistrates, for whom support is necessary. All these expenditures depend on the collection of
a reve-

a revenue, the expence of which is to be de-
frayed; the whole must be placed under the
superintendance of ministers, whose appoint-
ments ought to render them superior to the
temptation of treachery or meanness. All
this is necessary and all this we have much
cheaper, than any country in the world. Then
why this tremendous agitation?

The dangers of this age seem to impend,
rather from the people, than the monarch.
I love Monarchy, exactly poised, as is that
of England. It has all eminent writers on
its side. But it has more, a double experi-
ence justifies it; that of England, in which it
has produced great good; that of every other
form of government, none of which have ever
procured permanent and radical happiness.
The oppressions of absolute monarchy, the
convulsions of democracy, constitute alike
the panegyric of the English Constitution.
The recent events of France instruct us, that
the practice, as well as the theory is valuable.
It is not sufficient that there be a King;
the throne will totter, unless by the means of
influence, with which he is invested, many
are taught to look to the Monarch with ex-
pectation and gratitude; hence the necessity
of a very extensive patronage. Unless he be
decorated with superior dignity, opulent nobles
will outshine him in the public eye, and be-
come his competitors; hence the utility of a
most splendid Revenue; and there falls one of
Mr. Paine's chief arguments for Republicanism,
that the functions of the Executive magistrate
are discharged in America, at an expence so
much

much inferior to that incurred on the same account in England. When Mr. Paine rates at 20000*l.* per annum, the expence of the executive Government, his statement is unfair; he should have taken into the account, all the salaries paid throughout the United Provinces, and to foreign Ambassadors. The different value of money in either country is also to be estimated; and the habitual frugality of that, compared with the habitual profusion of this, nation. All these circumstances considered, it will appear that the President of America, has a most princely establishment, vastly superior to that of the first executive magistrate in Ireland. The disproportion which the inhabitants of America, bear to the extent of land, leaves property as yet pretty equally divided. The citizen, whom the choice of his country summons to preside, is, by the circumstances of the selection, sufficiently elevated above his fellows. In the more advanced state of Society, which has taken place in Europe, many are raised by their affluence above the law; for the public peace, it is necessary, that they should have a Paramount. Save only these collateral and incidental circumstances, arising from the situation of the respective countries, the executive Governments of England, or America, need not be rated higher, than that of Botany-Bay, in which the duty is more severe, and worse recompensed than either. But we provide our Sovereign with an ample revenue, not because he discharges certain functions, but in order to enable him to discharge them effectually.

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The influence of the Crown so much complained of, is perhaps the greatest and most certain foundation both of happiness and freedom. The King never can continue the Cypher, which powers without influence render him; either popular leaders will dethrone him, or, he will league with the very opulent citizens against the freedom of the people. In either case the result is an unsettled government, fatal to property, destructive to trade, subversive of civilization and tranquility. The King, by his situation and inviolability, should be consecrated, and set apart far above all his subjects; otherwise the envy, which preeminence excites, would expose him to eternal and innumerable difficulties, and compel him in his own defence to become severe, crafty, and vindictive. I consider the French, in the murder of their King, to have sinned as much against Society by the violation of this rule; as against morality and justice by the atrocious barbarity of the action. The great advantage of an executive magistrate, supreme, dignified, and hereditary, being, that by means of these very circumstances the public tranquillity may be preserved from the cabals and tumults of unbridled ambition, animated by the possibility of attaining that condition, which, as it is supreme, is also most envied; unless he receive the means of protecting himself from intrigue, the designation is frustrated, and he is elevated, but that he may fall in the first storm. Here the Constituting Assembly of France erred egregiously; it pared the royal Lion to the quick; the noble animal thus defenceless was hunted by blood-hounds to destruction.

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To our Peetrage, it has been objected that wisdom is not hereditary: If the choice in popular elections were often directed to the most wise; there might be plausibility in the argument; but here as in most other cases, theoretical promise falls short of practical performance. From banished Aristides, to Burke decried, and Flood neglected, how seldom has the popular voice been just or grateful? * The combat of malignity against merit is proverbial; the first is the most sure criterion of the second. There is no point upon which men less agree, than upon the degree of estimation to be allotted to a contemporary. To close the argument, let us look around; in one instance, the country can boast itself just; but how many others may be opposed of giddy, interested preference, even where influence ought least to be expected? it certainly is essential, that there should be in public life, much intelligence, and much talent; but it is most safe, that property predominate in the legislature; in minds eminently endowed, there is often a propensity to refine, which requires to be counteracted: It is the province of genius to suggest; but the sagacity, which guided by interest, can discern and decide, is no uncommon attribute. In the former sense of the term, wisdom certainly does not descend; but the latter quality is diffused with little limitation, and is of course, in no small degree hereditary.

The

* *Quam assidua sit eminentis fortunæ comes invidia, altissimæque hæreat, ex hoc etiam intelligi potest quod dum Octavii et Anicii triumphum nemo interpellaret, fuere qui Pauli impedire obiterentur. Vell. Paterculus.*

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The Peerage moreover is recruited by the frequent accession of the most eminent Commoners. Double deliberation is an impediment to the excess of influence; it has the advantage of interposing delay and creating caution, both essential, in the complicated relations of national business. These interests and duties cannot be entrusted to better hands, than those of an assembly, in which the principal fortunes of the Kingdom are collected: And to me it appears wise that the Peerage is hereditary: The Crown would acquire too much influence, by periodical nomination; and, if it were elective, the Assembly would lose in dignity; which is more important, it would imbibe the spirit of popular meetings; the very character, to avoid which is the object of the institution; it is intended, as a check, to the prevalence in the other house, of that disposition. The power of the Crown to appoint, and the inheritable quality of the Peerage, counterbalance each, the other. As the favor cannot be revoked, the dependance of expectation does not exist; and that of gratitude is gradually obliterated.

Men, whose tempers have been formed under the long and habitual enjoyment of opulence and splendor, will ever pretend to superior attention. They will seek indulgence at court, if the constitution withhold it. They will associate to elevate the Crown, unless they perceive, that more weight and consideration are derived to them, from a limited, than an absolute monarchy. Thus the people by too much parsimony in the article of privileges, may lay the foundation of a formidable league against freedom; and

by a little concession, acquires a vast deal more, on the side of peace, happiness and security. And the people can well afford to concede, for it parts, but with that, which to retain were inconvenient.

It may be said that the argument is in a circle; Monarchy and Nobility proved each by the other: To be more circumstantial, we will recur to the first principle. There has never been an instance of an happy Republic, in an advanced state of society; nor, which amounts to nearly the same thing, of a Government extremely frugal. America meets me in both assertions; I reply, as I have already stated, that America pays more than we do; her necessities, besides, are less than those, of any European nation; she stands aloof from the contests, and incursions of all other powers. The very extent of her frontier renders invasion nugatory; no force can be collected of sufficient magnitude to make an impression. At an early period of society, ere it has been split into inequalities; when the public exigencies require that one be exalted above the community, merit will direct the selection. But experience does not more fully justify the conclusion, that the oak will arise, where the acorn has been planted, than this other, that when men settle together, they will imperceptibly run into a diversity of conditions; into indigent and opulent, dependants and protectors. The encrease of population on the same extent of territory produces this effect. Nay there is among us, a natural tendency to treat some with more respect than others. The disposition

disposition has been found to exist in a state of great social backwardness, by the first invaders of Mexico and Peru; and by the latter discoverers of the South-Sea islands; in that estimable society of the Quakers, every effort of ingenuity has been exerted in vain; in despite of all contrivances the distinction of ranks is very fairly discernible.

When population has covered the soil, and that the redundancy divides the inhabitants of a country, into rich and poor, the former who will purchase partizans; the latter who will sell adherence; the public suffers not less from the rivalry of ambitious men, than it could from any other dangerous passion, which it is the object of civil Society to bridle. The supreme dignities would not be conferred upon merit, they would become as in the latter ages of the Roman Republic, the reward of intrigue and the prize of the turbulent. The difference of talents; the frugality of this man, the extravagance of that; the ingenuity of some, the luxury of others, will occasion a partial division of riches. This inclination to inequality is the ordinary course and must be suffered to proceed. Any attempt to counteract it, renders property precarious. The first encouragement to industry is the certainty, that the fruits of it are completely at the disposal of the acquirer; and industrious occupation is essential to the happiness of mankind in general. But moreover, the business of reducing every casual inequality must be endless, and keep the nation in a perpetual ferment. If commerce could exist, or be introduced; commerce would be a nuisance; for providing an influx of wealth, it would only furnish new competitors,

competitors, and additional means of concurrence. In fact, as nations have improved in the social arts, they have declined from the forms of Republicanism; they found them incompatible with tranquility. Carthage was ruined by the factions which arose from the want of a presiding influence. Rome abandoned her liberties in despair, after the most sanguinary contests ever known in the world: Holland, which was much more adapted by its size, than Ireland, for a republic, has subsided into an aristocracy, or rather into a limited monarchy. Inequality of condition is inevitable in society, and, the controuled preeminence of one remedies the evils arising from this inequality. From all these reasons, from the experience of other nations and the experience of our own, I conclude in favour a limited monarchy; but I am desirous not alone to have a King; he should have power and influence sufficient to keep him so. The use and advantage of the Peerage follow necessarily. In truth, altho' writers have usually treated the anecdote, as ridiculous, to me there appears wisdom in the conduct of that barbarous Prince, who laughed when he understood, that Venice had no supreme magistrate. Call it King, consul, president, executive or rather *executing* council, power must reside somewhere. The supporters of limited monarchy do not reason about the fact of creating this condition, but only about the necessity of restraining competition in the pursuit of it. They contend that authority is most innocent, and patronage most useful in the hands of a controuled sovereign. The general order maintained, when the late King of France attempted to escape, has been quoted to
 prove

prove the uselessness of Sovereigns.† But at that time there could not have been formed any intrigue to supplant him.

Discouraging of influence, I would not be understood to imply approbation of indefinite means of corruption. A great proportion of those who are called on to act in public life, should feel themselves either by their hopes or enjoyments, embarked in the same bottom with the Sovereign; thus much of that waywardness is subdued, which the desire of popularity often produces; these persons become counsel for the prerogative, and are interested to exert all their address and ingenuity, in defence of it; there is little apprehension that their scope of indulgence will be too extensive; that would render the crown independant of themselves; and even the man, most callous to shame, and insensible to duty and affection, will hesitate, when he is to subscribe the death warrant of his own importance.

We have a King, with the quiet, the order, the energy attendant, on that species of Government; Kings, in the primitive state, were the fathers of their people, but like other men they are disposed to encroach, they are liable to assume insensibly the characters of the elder brothers. It is necessary to use precautions with regard to them. We establish Parliament, a council in which the acts of the executive are publicly canvassed. If there were in Parliament, but three men, bold enough to investigate the affairs of state, they controul the minister essentially; they establish over him the censorship of public

opinion.

† By Joel Barlow esq; and others.

opinion. But fortunately we are certain, that he will always have many accusers, and these the keenest and most vigilant. In a numerous assembly all cannot be gratified; it is the interest of the discontented to detect the errors of those, whom they desire to supplant; the one pursue the conduct of ministers, with the lynx-eyed vigilance of expectation; the tenacity of possession prompts the others to uphold him. Between both, the people are served, they are secured from encroachment; the expenditure of their money is watched and limited. This is the system of rival interests controlling each the other, which of late it has been usual to condemn, but which I adhere to, because I see no better way to govern men, than by their common and natural propensities, because in England, where the passions have scope to play, they do so innocently, indeed advantageously; and because in France, where it was endeavoured that they should too closely be circumscribed and pent up; after many convulsive shocks, they burst at length in a ruinous explosion. And here I reluctantly perceive myself, dissentient from my friend, whose brilliant defence of the first French Revolution, has procured him the applause of Europe. Mr. Mackintosh "translating the question into familiar language," asks, "whether the vigilance of the master, or squabbles of the servants be the best security for faithful service." If the master be not in a condition, immediately to inspect his own affairs, he cannot be better secured than by the diversity of interests, among those whom he must confide in. And I insist that it is cheaper for the people, to pay in taxes, something more than what is necessary, than to have the face of the

the country disturbed, and the public industry interrupted, by very tumultuous, and very frequently recurring, elections. But I only criminate the excess, that there should be some, and these very popular, is necessary, in order to keep alive the inspecting spirit of the people; and to preserve the great essentials of freedom from violation; these are, the equal distribution of justice, (the only useful or rational equality.) The Habeas Corpus, and trial by Jury. The perfect freedom of person and property.

The example of America, and the small expence of the Republican system, are the principal arguments of Mr. Paine and his adherents. There are some expences inevitable; there are others, matters merely of patronage, which are expedient or even salutary. These are interwoven with our free Monarchical Constitution, are necessary to give the Monarch an interest in the Government, and indeed are almost the only price we pay for his interference; all, who endeavour to reduce the expences of the state very low, are, many perhaps unknown to themselves, the advocates of a Republic; for such in fact, and in inconvenience the Government will be, if the Crown be essentially enfeebled, and if public Men consider popular favor, their sole reward and object. Many occurrences arise in public life, in which that man is incompetent to act with firmness and discretion, whose actions must vary with the breath of popularity. The people it is true seldom judges ultimately wrong, but, as seldom, are its first impressions right, or proceedings grounded on them judicious. In the general collections of Men, the most sensible are the most acquiescing; the intemperate most forward;

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the current of applause usually wafts the vehement to the goal, and confers the prize of momentary estimation on the wildest and fiercest, or, as they are termed, the boldest measures. He who lags to reflect, or solicits breathing time, is jostled from the course, without retrospect to the merit of past, or attention to the means of future service. This is a tolerably accurate representation of what has happened in France, it is that, which ever has, and ever will take place, where the diversified gradations of influence are abrogated. Woe to him, who committing himself to that boisterous and uncertain element, *the Many*, is obliged to vary with its fluctuations, and to accommodate his conduct to all its inconsistent vicissitudes. Woe to the country in which such men and such views will preponderate. I would not impose a malediction upon any land, that its rank and talents should, precarious in situation, be rendered desperate in principle. If talents be necessitated to seek estimation, by goading the public mind, by stimulating its appetites and ministering to its caprices, there are men, the most praiseworthy, who will abandon the career; but there are others who will therefore toil in it with redoubled assiduity. The Crown and Peerage will sink in the unequal contest; better at once bluntly abolish Royalty, and, endeavouring to settle the country under a new form, spare the convulsive agonies of expiring Prerogative. Better crush the venerable system in its Palace, than expose its debility to public derision; like decrepid Priam, leaning on the Altar, aiming the dart, to which his feeble arm cannot

cannot give force, a victim devoted to the sword,
of the first pitiless assailant.

To taxes, as to all things else, there must be limits; but taxation, in itself, may not alone be allowable, it may be necessary; in a populous country, when the necessaries of life are remarkably cheap, the inhabitants are by the facility of supplying their wants, rendered idle and dissipated; when the labor of three days may obtain the sustenance of seven, a man will continue during the remaining four, inactive. This cuts double, both against himself, and against Society. He acquires a bad habit during his indolence. He is perhaps engaged in debauch. He returns reluctantly to his employment, and at length becomes depraved entirely. Rent is a kind of tax; in several parts of Ireland, the rents have been, tripled, nay quadrupled within forty years past. And this was not so much the effect, as the cause of national prosperity; for, the great wealth of a country may frequently lie dormant; if the inhabitants residing listlessly upon the surface, will not exert themselves to investigate its resources. Before the abovementioned period, when rent was very low, and other taxes little known, half the year was lavished in carousing. But, so soon as, labor became compulsory, fortunes have been raised both for the tenantry and landlords; and the civilization of the country, has advanced materially. I do not find evidence, that any class of men, or branch of manufacture, languishes in this country under national imposts. They fall on the superfluities, not on the necessaries of life; a reduction of them would not augment

the poor man's comfort, but the consumption of the opulent ; and this extraordinary consumption would not be beneficial to the country ; for the objects, on which it would fall, are foreign produce. I enter into this detail, not as defending local impositions which I know to be frequently exorbitant and useless ; not as justifying any particular degree or arrangement : but, in some attempts, made to inflame the minds of the lower orders, before the sitting of Parliament, I have observed the promised advantage of removing taxes, put forward very boldly ; and I wish to enforce a truth, that taxes and civil society are mutually necessary to each other ; and that the former make none, or at least, a small part of the grievances of the Irish peasantry ; consuming little of what is liable to taxes, they pay indirectly scarce any contribution ; and it has been announced, that they are to be relieved from the hearth money,* the only direct tax paid by them ; there are few public regulations to which the feeling mind will more readily offer the tribute of applause than to the abrogation of that paltry subtraction from misery, little to the state, and much to the wretch who yields it.

To any person who will take the trouble to contrast the districts of Ireland inhabited by Protestants, with those, in which a Catholic peasantry is most prevalent, no doubt can remain, that all existing evils may be referred to the direct or indirect operation of the Catholic exclusion. I impute not any thing to the

* Tobacco, the poor man's luxury, is I understand, rated next in their grievances. An alteration in the duties on this article has been also spoken of.

the national character, nor do I impeach individuals; but I apply to Ireland a general remark, which may be found in every political writer; when the gentry feel not any necessity to court the favour of their inferiors, they are deficient in offices of protection and tenderness. Without undertaking to point out the man, or the body of men, who have been the authors of specific mischief; I assert that the peasantry has melted under this system, and cannot revive, until it be previously abolished. To the universal rule there are estimable exceptions, as there are brutal excesses which proceed beyond it. Under the same climate, rather better circumstanced in point of soil, with this single difference in internal regulation, whilst Ulster has risen into a garden, the other Provinces have degenerated to deserts. Let us not hear the imputation of natural and habitual indolence; indolence, in the people, is symptomatic of a vicious form of Government, and as it never adheres to the emigrants from this island, reflection cannot be deceived in investigating the real cause of it. When I offer this remark to the learned author of a late treatise who has concluded erroneously, from very just principles, it may prevent the necessity of a more elaborate refutation. I heartily coincide with him on the subject of virtual representation; but the Catholics are not represented virtually. The very statutes, they complain of, prove it. The privilege of voting may be dispensed with when we are confident that no law can be enacted, from the operation of which the legislator may withdraw himself. But the designation, Roman Catholic, not only may, but has been used, as a partial description; and regulations framed under it, which do not affect the lawgivers; in this case according to every

every rational rule of virtual representation, Catholics either ought to sit in Parliament; or, to enjoy over the lower house, the control which is given by election. The latter is not, as Mr. Sheridan thinks it, power; it is protection; not the gratification of ambition or vanity, but essential to the existence of the Catholics, and to the cultivation of the kingdom; whilst the boroughs are preserved even under any variations of the landed property, the right of voting for representatives conceded to the Catholics, can affect them as individuals only, not as a body. It never can exalt the sect into rivalry with the establishment. When Mr. Sheridan has considered more minutely his project of a separate Representation, he will find the discussion of it needless; instead of consolidating us into one nation, it would create an eternal barrier of separation. But let the Catholics be mixed in the mass of constituents and in the general occupations of the country. The bounties on tillage have advanced the prosperity of Ireland, this bounty on the growth of man will complete it. Four words will mark the series of cause and effect. Protection, Comfort, Population, Manufacture.

We are indeed peculiarly well circumstanced in Ireland. We have the advantages of a limited monarchy, without incurring any thing near the degree of expence, which in other countries is annexed to the maintenance of royalty. This is the fair manner of considering our situation; it ought to be contrasted with those neighbouring nations whose state of society requires a monarchical constitution. With Great Britain, with Spain; or even with less extensive realms, Portugal and the Northern kingdoms. Not alone what we
pay

pay should be taken into the estimate; but what we enjoy. For instance, a frugal despot may contrive to impose upon his subjects a sum not by one half equal, to the expences of our government. We may nevertheless be ten-fold more rich and thriving than his subjects; and if the option were offered, we should prefer to encrease our taxes considerably, rather than exchange conditions. If there be any attention paid to expenditure in a despotic government, it may be rendered less burthen some directly to the people, for it is less complex than a limited monarchy. But indirectly it may be vastly more oppressive. Altho' these governments do not exact, they desolate. There are many things, which it is better to pay for than want; and which even, calculated upon a plan of œconomy, we may afford to purchase highly. Of this nature, as contrasted with the surrounding monarchies, is, *Liberty*. Of this nature, as contrasted with America, is our limited royalty, a condition, in the advanced state of society, inevitable. I repeat it again, no comparison is fair, which does not include the entire case of both parties. If our Government even were vastly more expensive, than that of America; both our means and our necessities are greater. The excess would be no cause of wonder, the reverse is matter of congratulation. A man, six feet tall, would be considered unreasonable, if he should repine, that his clothes cost more, than those of a pigmy.---The public roads of this country are kept at a very great expence, much higher, I apprehend, than necessary; even so, it is less hurtful to preserve, than to neglect them;

them; and better to pay for the service, than that the labourers should, as in France, be compelled at the discretion of public officers to repair the highways, indiscriminately in the seasons, in which labor is most pernicious to health, or most precious to the individual. A farmer casting his eye over the public disbursements of old France, might exclaim, happy country! not a single item for that charge which presses us so heavily; but he would be readily undeceived. That personal attendance to keep up the roads which the French were not permitted to commute, was the most oppressive grievance in the country.---It appears at first view tolerably evident, that the inhabitants of every district can protect and keep it quiet; and many censure as an imposition, the hiring men to discharge this duty: On a second glance, the associations, which must be formed for the purpose, will appear, attended with charges more extravagant. They occasion expensive meetings, divert the people from business, and promote idleness; If the men whose time is valuable, were to subscribe to a fund the incidental expences of assembling frequently, it would appear, that they might make a clear profit of the value of their time, and that of the persons they employ; and all the idlers of the country might be kept under discipline, for the mere charges of public meetings. If a cutler proceeded on a plan of saving, to make a pair of boots, he would find himself in the end a considerable loser, for by attending to the trade at which he was expert, he might have amassed during that period, infinitely more than the amount of his economy. Civil society, like the animal frame, is a complicated system

of mutual relations and dependance. He must cast an eye over the entire mass, who desires to correct a part of it. It is not enough singly to consider Ireland a country subject to a monarch, or connected with the sister kingdom, or a candidate for trade and manufacture, or regulated by a Representative, or swayed by an Aristocratic body, the entire controlled by the superintendence of an intelligent people; all these parts must be regarded as contributing to constitute one great whole; and where, any member of the integrant is reprehensible, it ought to be viewed with reference to the remainder. Associated in confederation, with another great kingdom, Ireland enjoys advantages, which she could not, in her isolated condition, pretend to. Whoever estimates the necessities, with which a commercial state must be provided, will perceive, that, if the connexion were dissolved, or if we adhered so loosely to England, that she should learn to consider us a separate nation, the expence of a distinct Government would amount to much more than our present revenue. The Crown is the great bond of Union; in proportion as it is enfeebled, the adhesion of the Empire gives way; measures of that tendency should be undertaken with delicacy. In order to illustrate the relative importance of things which seem insignificant, I will select an article of innocent luxury, seldom noticed, unless, as a topic of pedantic ridicule, or austere declamation. When the inhabitants of a country become so numerous, that tillage does not afford sufficient occupation, new modes of raising subsistence must be devised, and these are to be sought in the effects and indulgences of luxury. It will perhaps be esteem

ed paradoxical, to assert, that a lady dressed to appear in public, is one of the most useful persons in Society; how many home, how many foreign artists does she employ? How much native produce is exchanged for her expensive fopperies? Whilst she only pursues the light vanity of admiration, the manufacturer receives the profit of his labor, and is comfortable; the produce of the husbandman's toil has made the circuit of the earth, and his family is happy. The exercise of benevolence would not probably have rendered the same person equally useful, or the superfluity thus lavished of equal benefit to Society. This mode of expenditure justifies, and atones for the inequality of wealth, and renders the modern preferable to the more ancient use of it. † And thus, in public affairs, money expended is often more serviceable and gives more encouragement than the distribution of bounties.

It is a question whether America has gained, but it is beyond a doubt that the mother country

† The very great advantage of innocent Luxury, in giving occupation to the superfluous hands of a country, appears to me conclusive against breaking down great fortunes by the equal partition of inheritances. The Constituting Assembly adopted this project, and Mr. Paine vindicates it. Unless there be some who have too much, and who will diffuse their superfluity, many artists will starve, and many elegant occupations be discouraged. If property were not occasionally accumulated in heaps; but distributed uniformly in small parcels, the effect would be, to encrease the number of unprofitable idlers; it would not augment the consumption, which is primarily useful, but materially injure that, which in the consideration of Policy, ranks equally high, altho' the gravity of severe wisdom under rates it.

try has not suffered, by the separation of the Colonies: If the United States, like this kingdom, were only to derive a new form of internal Government from the rupture, without doubt they would have been considerable losers. The mother country was at the entire expence of protection; and never was any internal Government so frugal. The truth is, the civil war in America, and the consequent dissolution of the connexion with Great Britain, proceeded from the prevalence in the Colonies, of that Republican Spirit, and Republican Constitution, which many desire, at this day, to introduce in Ireland. The first Emigrants were permitted to organize themselves, on a plan so very democratic, that the King in many Provinces was only titular, and had less weight than the President at present. The Colonies were in reality, Common-wealths under the protection of England; and the removal of the Royal Authority was occasioned by circumstances, similar to those which subverted the labors of the French constituting Assembly. In most Colonies, a number of public officers were nominated by the people; those, of whom the Crown preserved the appointment, were sent

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+ Mr. Paine, whose estimate is more likely to be under the truth than to exceed it, rates the taxes of America, at 5s per head. I understand, that, the public Revenue of Ireland, amounts to about 1,400,000 £. sterling annually, and the population, to near five millions of inhabitants. Thus the Irishman does not contribute so much as the American. But, considered in another light, he pays not above one half; 5s in that country, will purchase as much of any commodity, and is therefore equal to 10s in Ireland. The true manner of deriving information, from a comparison with America, is by collating the expen-

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from England. There was of course, little to assuage, and every thing to exasperate the asperity, men usually entertain against that preeminence, in which they do not participate. The Americans procured, what we enjoy, trade and domestic taxation; on the side of protection and œconomy, they lost considerably. Mr. Paine, having America constantly in view, reasons uniformly wrong, for he supposes uniformly, that every other country, is in the same circumstances. Six words refute him completely, *There is no mob in America*. There are yet in that country but two classes, those which correspond to the middle Gentry, and to the Yeomanry of England. The population of the States not affording such a number of hands, that some find it necessary to minister to the indolence of others, every man is occupied and there is not leisure for the speculations or the contentious passions which distract Europe. Thus, the casualty of the moment, renders America the most easily governed country, and guarantees her from the imperfections of Republicanism. She has few, sufficiently idle, to pursue ambition; sufficiently rich to bribe, or poor to be corrupted. But the series of cause and effect, which lead to, the dissolution of the American Democracy; or at least to alter it materially, may be easily traced by any man of discernment.

The

ees of the present Independant Government of America, with those incurred when she was allied to Great Britain. We are informed by Dr. Smith, that the entire expence of the American Colony Government, before the war, was, no more than 64,700*l.* per annum. Speaking of the little detriment England sustained by the loss of America, I must not be supposed to include the expence of the last war.

They delude egregiously, who represent, and they err egregiously, who believe, that the Constitution of America, is formed after the models upon which we have been desired to correct our Government. The internal regulations of the respective States, and of the entire confederation, are in every person's hands; whoever will look into them, must admit, that they are founded, not on the rights of man, but on the accommodation of social life. The entire system labors to palliate, what it cannot remedy, the mischiefs of Democracy. So closely have the Legislators of the new World, adhered to the British system, that, the omission of the King's name in public acts, is the only difference discernable. The American President, whilst in office is a limited monarch; the American Senate, a temporary Peerage. The latter are not stiled My Lords, and the address of the former, to the Assembly, is "Fellow Citizens." Then one Distinction only remains, between our situation and that of America; there the supreme executive Magistrate is named by popular choice; we are aware, that in the circumstances of our country, every election would produce a civil war; or a state of tumult nearly as destructive; that in the intermediate periods, the Government would be feeble, irresolute and uncertain; the country, a scene of acrimony and cabal, revenge and retaliation; public prosperity at a stand, and private happiness poisoned. But it is further worthy of remark, that such is the palpable excellence of our institutions, that they were closely followed by a nation not favorably disposed towards the country it copied; a nation which was perfectly
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free to chuse, and which did chuse after the most full deliberation.

I cannot dismiss the subject without endeavouring to divest Republicanism of its last pretensions to excellence. It is a condition not either of virtue or of justice. The anecdotes of Roman or Grecian heroism, which in youth impress us forcibly, will be found on a comparison of other circumstances in the age, to have taken place when the actors were not so much refined as the Indian Americans at present. The most bloody war undertaken by Sparta, was also the most unjust. It was to screen from punishment a member of its own state, who had defrauded and murdered a citizen of Messene. The Roman history presents at every instant, atrocious acts of tyranny and abuse of power, in the treatment of slaves, allies or provincials. The recital uniformly concludes with the picture of splendid impunity. The Patrician Government of Rome was very defective, but yet was better than the popular constitution which succeeded to it. Whilst the former continued, the blood of a citizen was never shed in Rome; from the time of the Gracchi, when first she witnessed the mutual assassination of her children, to the overthrow of the Republic, Rome was a scene of contention and carnage.

There can be very little of Republican design in Ireland; the wretched speculations which involved France in calamity can have few admirers. There is great internal evidence to reconcile this nation to the monarchical system; in corroboration of ancient habits, there are strong motives

tives of personal affection to the King, which should at present attach to it a considerable party. We have nothing to dread from direct Republicans ; but something is to be apprehended from the error of those, who, pursuing measures which render the prerogative, too feeble, would precipitate themselves finally, perhaps imperceptibly into that inconvenient, that boisterous form of government. It may not be useless to call the attention of such persons,* from the immediate, to the incidental effect of their proceedings. It is not enough to talk of Parliamentary Reform in general terms; some specific plan ought to be proposed, which the mind should rest on. A change in the representation may be the greatest possible good, it may be also the greatest possible evil. By diminishing in an extreme degree the influence of the Crown, it may convert the country into a Republic; by narrowing too much the representative body, an insolent Aristocracy may be established in every district. The monied interest, which is rising rapidly in Ireland, may be deprived of all weight whatever; if the Representation be very popular, and the elections be frequent, and tumultuous, neither trade nor manufacture can be carried on, and the people will become like that of Ancient Rome, idle, seditious expecting its support from the bounty of candidates; until at length like that Republic, the opulent disgusted, and the necessitous overwhelmed in corruption, a system of vexatious freedom, will be abandoned

* It may be necessary to notice here, which I before casually omitted that my remarks on the formation of conventions cannot include the late meeting of the Catholic Committee which from some circumstances of resemblance has received that appellation.

ed entirely. The project of the French Constitution failed in some measure because the original legislators did not make sufficient allowance for the passions, which operate in an advanced state of Society; they might also have erred on the contrary extreme, and have left the scope for influence too extensive. The people are disposed to consider with great, and frequently with well founded jealousy, those, who are elevated to authority; yet unless popular favor lead to the gratification of liberal ambition, no man of eminent endowments will ever be solicitous to attain it, and the court will have a monopoly of the talents and literature of the nation. If persons of high birth and fortune are pinched too close by democratic manners and regulations, they will take refuge with the supreme power, and incline with all their influence to the support of absolute authority. Men, educated with a certainty of possessing hereditary affluence are seldom those who suffer their talents most completely to expand, and their understandings to attain the extreme of cultivation. Men of talents are necessary for the management of popular assemblies, they are the safeguard of the people, but in general they cannot procure admission into Parliament unless under the patronage of influence. This formidable order, which never works in vain upon the public mind, will be the foe, when it is not the auxiliary of Liberty; no devices will exclude it from public business, and if the men of rank and men of talents are compelled to join the court in a conspiracy against freedom no system of democracy will be able to withstand the coalition. All these

these discordant views and interests are to be compared and adjusted, before our representation be amended. The improvement of our Constitution furnishes without doubt excellent room for speculation. But it is a matter, not to be easily decided, and may be pressed improvidently and prematurely. It does not appear to me that, when a grievance really exists, and is perceived, any one time can be more proper to urge the consideration than another. The design of a party may have seasons of convenience. But the grievance of a people seriously felt by the sober part of it, will ever create its own opportunity of redress. No government can contest with its subjects a matter of regulation sufficiently important to be strenuously urged, and on which the utility of concession is acknowledged universally.

On this subject it is more easy to determine what it would be inconvenient to remove, than how to repair the chasm. The project of abolishing forty shilling freeholders, which in the croud of current schemes has been of late hinted, appears exceptionable : To admit all persons indiscriminately to the exercise of political power, would be to overturn society;* which, strictly speak-

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* I have here again to encounter Mr. Sheridan, who having honored me with the epithets of "sensible and moderate," proceeds by means of a simple process, cutting a sentence in the middle, to make me deliver doctrines the reverse of my own opinions, and of which the author ought to be held mad and intemperate. From that period, at which I had the good fortune to give to the public mind the first impulse, on the Catholic business, to the present hour which justifies

ing, is the combination of those who *have*, against those who *have not*. But it is extremely expedient that some, not too many, from humble life, should enjoy a privilege, which creating a dependance of their superiors, may communicate a firmness of character to the one, and soften in the others, the arrogance of prosperity. Moreover, in manufacturing districts, and such I hope every county in Ireland will ere long be, the forty shilling freeholders are connected with the trading, and counterbalance the more opulent

justifies and crowns my expectation, I have argued the question more extensively than most persons out of Parliament; in the different Essays that bear my name, and in the Papers, which I prepared at the request of public bodies, and which were adopted by them, the elective franchise has never been represented—as the general right of man, but, as a privilege growing out of the constitution; and the unqualified exclusion of all the Catholics, not as a state of slavery, a rant of political pedantry, which I reject, but as a very inconvenient situation; severe to the parties deprived, useless, nay pernicious, to the country which deprived them. This Gentleman's proposal to confer civil offices upon the Catholics, and reserve the privilege of voting, is “like giving one ruffles, when wanting a shirt:” he cannot be ignorant, that without political influence, there is not much opportunity for obtaining civil employment.

That to elect members of parliament is a conditional privilege, not an absolute right, is the leading assertion of that Pamphlet which Mr. S. favored with his notice. From what part of it he collects occasion to include me in the sneer of “these theorists,” I am at a loss to determine: I can only discern between his theories and mine, a single difference, that his are less accurate. He has reviewed with yet more apparent harshness, a discourse delivered in the Catholic Convention; the author of which, Dr. Mc. Neven, a man of taste and erudition, both displayed in that performance, merited at the hands of a scholar, a less coarse treatment.

opulent farmers who are influenced by the landed interest. And I apprehend that those in the north of Ireland who hold the privilege of voting by this tenure, would not be inclined to forego the exercise of it.

I confess, in matters of government I have but small reliance on human ingenuity. I do not observe so much good to have resulted from any form, as from the patch-work constitution which accidentally arose in England. Methinks at this instant, causes little observed, effects tacitly produced, are operating great reforms in Ireland. We impute too much to the Boroughs. They are certainly more in number than any policy can warrant. And the accumulation of many in the hands of individuals, gives more influence than perhaps ought to belong to a subject. But the apathy of the people, and the conversion of several counties into close representations have been much more fatal to independance; of these, the former was an indirect, the latter a direct consequence of the system of Catholic exclusion. In many counties a great proportion of the men of property were disfranchised under pretext of religion. It naturally ensued that the elections could not be exempt from influence. In fact, a multitude of the Constituent body became Placemen or Expectants, and the Representative was obliged to connect himself with Administration, in order to fulfil his engagements. The north of Ireland, usually jealous of the Court, attributed its influence to close corporations; the Protestants, in the Roman Catholic counties, voted for the powerful candidate, accepted preferments, muttered about freedom

and corruption, voted again and kept the secret ; or indeed contributed to shift the odium, upon their neighbours. The most useful and independant men who ever sat in Parliament, would have been lost to their country, if there had been no other mode of admission, but by open canvass and election. I know not that any strict principle of justice, assigns to one district a right, which it denies to another. But in politics we must often receive “ the *expedient*,” as conducing to “ the *right*.” and rest content with remote good consequences.---- The description of men, returned for Boroughs, seems to be in some cases more grievous, than the mode of nomination. The Supreme Legislature of a trading country, ought to contain some Merchants, and not so many Barristers. Gentlemen, from this profession, whose fortunes and talents are in a state of mediocrity, may perhaps have no other view, than the public good ; but if they advance a large premium, the malignant world will judge otherwise. The chiefs of the bar may be excused ; the country has little to dread from the effects of liberal ambition. Such men cannot benefit themselves, without having first rendered essential service to the Community ; and even in power, an enlarged mind will never divest itself entirely of opinions ; favorable to freedom ; nor be able to contemn the public estimation. We need not dread the rich man, who purchases a situation flattering to his vanity, by a sum, he can afford to lose, and which he chuses thus to dissipate. These alone are formidable, who cannot possibly have any view, but the speculation of low pecuniary barter. It is said, that mercantile information

formation can be had, at the bar of the house, and in private conversation; True, but it may not always be called for; and even when it is, will not carry so much weight, as if a respectable member, personally interested, announced his sentiments. When Sportsmen in Parliament can procure laws, for the protection of their dogs; Merchants and manufacturers might be expected to attract not a little attention. I should wish to see Gentlemen of this description in the House of Commons, were it only to eradicate that feudal, barbarous notion, disgraceful to a civilized people, which from late occurrences seems still to linger in this Kingdom. (Not, it is true, among the most honorable persons,) that the mercantile should be held subject to the other occupations. A merchant or extensive manufacturer, as he gives employment to a great number, is the most useful; and, as his pursuits require a very considerable degree of understanding, ought to be one of the most respected in Society. In the neighbouring monarchies, to have excelled in commerce, was esteemed a good, in some instances a sufficient cause, for conferring the rank of Nobility. In Ireland one would suppose that to be engaged in trade was considered by some, a reason for disfranchisement. It matters little, how men are appointed to seats in Parliament, provided they be eminent and deserving, selected from the different professions of importance. This in fact, and not the parcelling the country, into districts of nominally equal importance, is a fair and impartial Representation. Of all modes ever devised, this latter appears most exceptionable. It would vest the dominion of the
Kingdom,

Kingdom, in the hands of mere country Gentlemen, to the eternal exclusion of the monied and learned classes. If either Hume or Montesquieu, were at this day, an inhabitant of Ireland, he would not be elected by a county, in which he had not an estate. Such is in general, the narrow pride and jealousy of the landed interest. Unless a number of Boroughs, with all their imperfections, be preserved, I do not discern by what means, monied men, the natural guardians and superintendants of the rising prosperity of the country, can find access to Parliament. Persons of very large floating property, may not and probably will not have so much personal influence, as will enable them to carry a single election. If they even had, the habits of canvas are inconsistent with the avocations of a man of business; and in the intrigues of canvas, a pert barrister, not two months in the hall, would distance him. Even in cities, the trading interest, altho' weighty, does not predominate in the elections; there the Demagogue in fashion would sway; for there I believe, the influence of caprice might in some cases be substituted, to that which at present governs. If the number of county Representatives were encreased, the influence of men of large landed property, would either cease, or continue. In the latter case the increased number of Representatives would enable them to carve out the Representation, more to their mutual satisfaction. In the former, which of the two is infinitely less likely, the returns would consist nearly of that description of Gentlemen, who at present form the Grand Juries; many of that class ought to sit in Parliament, but I think the

Legislature

Legislature may be constituted on a better plan, than if it were composed of them entirely. The contest of influence, with independance, which exists at present, has a good effect upon the public mind; it is even advantageous that the hopes of the two parties be cherished by occasional victory. The majority of Members, ought to be thus elected. The vigilance of the people might otherwise relax. And the admission of the Catholics to the right of suffrage,* as it will open all the counties, several corporations, and many boroughs will I apprehend place the elections on this footing. But the interests of the different orders may be cemented, contradictions reconciled, and the freedom of the whole preserved admirably, altho' many be introduced into the house either by the recommendation of a Patron, who must discern some cause of selection, or by means, which, it may not be correct, more than to allude to. There is another article in the reform which cannot be too loudly reprobated. The compensation to Borough proprietors. This would be to impose on the nation a great new debt, and of course a great additional interest, on a speculation, which the event will certainly prove to be delusive, that it is practicable to eradicate influence. I think it possible, however, to modify the effects of it: and that such modification will be obtained by the admission of the

* It is extremely wise not to limit this concession, for if the Catholics were excluded from voting in corporations, they might be induced to level all their influence against them; in the counties, limited franchise creates an independant Catholic interest: unlimited franchise, leaves every thing in the natural order. The Protestant landlord will always be able to influence his dependant Catholic tenants.

the Catholics to the right of suffrage, the encreased public spirit of the nation, and commerce, which it seems our inclination, as well as our interest to cultivate.

The candidate for a seat in Parliament, must in some manner recommend himself to his intended constituents, by the sacrifice of his time, by acts of hospitality or kindness; all of these are expensive: It is not to be supposed, that a man will be venal, because he runs into expence; but because he cannot afford it. A lawyer, not of note or merit, who wriggles himself into Parliament, may well be suspected; but a minister cannot bestow any preferment sufficient to induce men of large estate, or opulent merchants, deriving considerable profits from a considerable capital, to sacrifice the material interests of the country. If he had power to bribe thus extensively, he would not stand in need of Parliaments. Nor do I see how it should happen, that two men of equal fortunes might not act alike independantly, whilst the one paid a sum he could spare, for a peaceable return; and the other was put to double the expence, and vast labour and loss of health, during the fatigues and intemperance of a contested election. If a mode were devised, by which the returns should be perfectly impartial, no expence incurred, and the most unexceptionable men alone selected, substantial benefit might be hoped from altering the manner of electing our Representatives. In the impossibility of attaining these conditions, lies the obstacle to reform, and until some change shall be effected in the propensities of the human mind to partiality, we can expect
little

little more than a transfer from one to another description. We are in the condition of him, who should seek by change of climate, to shun the corroding anxiety which still pursues him, for his own distempered imagination is the seat of it. *Cælum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt.* The course of events, if they be suffered to proceed, will bring about exactly that species of Reform, which is adapted to our tempers. The first and greatest of all Revolutions has been produced among us, without the aid of plan or project. *The public spirit of the Catholics has been excited.* The controversy on the French Revolution extended more universally in Ireland, than any other literary discussion. The public mind was prepared by the diffusion of general principles. The publications which attracted most notice applied these to the particular situation of the Catholics; fortunately for that body, the present, like other opportunities, was not suffered to elapse. The circumstances of the times required that some person should break silence. In the course of a month after the declaration published in October 1791, the Catholic question made more way in this country, than for the ten years preceding. During that period, it had the active and opulent men it has now, and many, more distinguished persons, whom it has been since deprived of; but they never were, and probably never should have been, able to bear it beyond its seat in Essex-street, without the accession of another description, persons competent to act upon the public mind, to collect, improve, and concentrate the general sentiment. The system of monopoly was compact, it resisted the dull assaults of repining im-

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portunity ; but under the noon of reason, the waxen fabric melts and vanishes. Without this previous preparation, any attempt to reform, would have been nugatory ; with it, a much more temperate correction of our institutions will be adequate. If the administration were disposed to act erroneously, they could not attempt improper measures, in the face of the present temper of the kingdom.

If the bigotted Convention of 1783 had succeeded, in riveting for ever the fetters of the Catholics ; with all its specious advantage of Reform, Ireland never would have known, the control over power, the degree of freedom from restraint, and exemption from influence which exist at present. Before the two latter are entirely eradicated, it will be necessary to ascertain, that three hundred men in the House of Commons, exonerated from the influence of attachment, will never feel that of any other passion, of pride, antipathy, ambition or avarice. Until then we must be content to palliate. But a decisive mode of palliation might be adopted. The influence of landlord over tenant, as it exists in some boroughs, is very natural. It secures good treatment to the latter. There might be created a power of transferring Corporations from decayed to flourishing places. It might be rendered compulsory on magistrates to receive in opulent towns all respectable inhabitants. Whilst important towns, Belfast for instance, are not represented to their satisfaction, some murmurs are to be expected. These local regulations, combined with the Catholic emancipation, will produce a very fair representation, as impartial

as circumstances will admit, and adequate to all purposes of freedom, tranquillity and commerce. I should have observed before, that the imputed venality of boroughs must necessarily limit itself. When there shall be many monied purchasers, and that men of landed fortune, ousted from the counties by the new independant interest, shall be thrown upon the boroughs ; and, that these also, in consequence of the same interest, shall be diminished in number, the terms of purchase will rise so high, that no man will hazard them, on the hope of advancing his fortune.

T H E E N D.

